

Israel-Hamas war

Israeli raid knocks out last hospital in northern Gaza

Attack on Kamal Adwan comes as Israel steps up offensive that began in October



Wounded Palestinians being evacuated from Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza © REUTERS

Andrew England in London and **Neri Zilber** in Tel Aviv DECEMBER 28 2024

An Israeli military raid on a hospital in Gaza has put the last major health facility in the besieged strip's north out of service, exacerbating a deepening humanitarian crisis in the enclave, according to the UN's health agency.

The attack on the Kamal Adwan Hospital came as Israel stepped up an offensive in northern Gaza that began in October and has killed hundreds of people and forced tens of thousands to flee.

The Israeli military said it is fighting to prevent Hamas regrouping in Gaza's north, where most of the population have been forced to flee during Israel's 14-month offensive against the Palestinian militant group.

The World Health Organisation said initial reports indicated that key departments of the medical facility were severely burnt and destroyed during the raid on Friday.

It said that 60 health workers and 25 patients in critical condition, including those on ventilators, remained at the hospital, while others were forced to evacuate to another damaged hospital.

"The systematic dismantling of the health system in Gaza is a death sentence for tens of thousands of Palestinians in need of healthcare," WHO said in a statement late on

Friday. “This horror must end and healthcare must be protected.”

The Palestinian health ministry said Kamal Adwan’s operating and surgical departments, laboratory, maintenance, ambulance units and warehouses had “been completely burnt”.

“The occupation army is forcibly transferring the sick and injured, at gunpoint . . . to the Indonesian hospital, which lacks medical supplies, water, medicines and even electricity and generators,” it said in a statement. “There are patients who are threatened with death at any moment as a result of the harsh conditions.”

The Israeli military said on Saturday it had concluded a two-day operation at the hospital after the facility had been turned into a “major terror stronghold” by Hamas.

Some 240 suspected militants were arrested at the hospital, some of whom were posing as patients, including the hospital director Hussam Abu Safiya, who was currently “being questioned in Gaza”, spokesperson Nadav Shoshani said.

The Israeli military strenuously denied its forces were responsible for starting a “small fire in an empty building” at the facility the day before, which Shoshani said had caused minimal damage.

Hamas denied that its fighters were using the hospital for military activities.

UN agencies and humanitarian groups have repeatedly condemned Israel for attacking medical facilities in Gaza since it launched its offensive against Hamas after the Palestinian group’s October 7, 2023 attack killed 1,200 people.

The WHO said it had verified 516 attacks on health facilities and medical transport in Gaza, adding that more than 90 per cent of the strip’s medical facilities were either damaged or destroyed.

The Israeli offensive in northern Gaza has continued as mediators push for a deal to end the war and to secure the release of the remaining Israeli hostages held in the strip before US president-elect Donald Trump returns to the White House next month.

The operation has reduced Jabalia, which before the war was the largest refugee camp in Gaza and home to more than 100,000 people, to rubble, and expanded to neighbouring Beit Lahia where the Kamal Adwan Hospital is located.

On Saturday, the Israeli military said its forces had begun operations in the Beit Hanoun district.

Over the course of the day, two long-range rockets were fired from the area towards Jerusalem, according to Israeli authorities — the first such barrage from Gaza in months. The projectiles were intercepted by Israeli air defences.

Israel's offensive has killed more than 45,000 people, according to Palestinian health officials, and forced the vast majority of the strip's 2.3mn people from their homes.

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